

Friday, September 19, 2008

From the Coeur d'Alene Press

- Sights, sounds of history

From the Spokesman-Review

- No education news stories posted online today.

From the Moscow Pullman Daily News (password required)

- CONSTITUTION DAY: Starting from scratch

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- Middleton voters OK school bond

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- 'Clickers' let teachers see who's really learning a lesson
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- State to help charter school developers
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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Sights, sounds of history

Students, staff gather to mark NIC's 75th birthday

COEUR d'ALENE -- The voices of the Andrews Sisters singing their classic World War II radio hit "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B" floated from speakers on to the lawn at North Idaho College's Fort Sherman Park on Thursday as hundreds of students, employees and community members gathered for an old-fashioned picnic to celebrate the community college's first day of classes 75 years ago.

Tunes from other eras played while classic cars from multiple decades lined the curb leading into the park, reminders of the college's many years serving North Idaho.

"I would say this was a success," said NIC spokeswoman Stacy Hudson. "This was fantastic."

Hudson estimated that between 750 and 1,000 people stopped by the two-hour mid-day event.

Bearing plates of hot dogs, baked beans and watermelon, served by college administration courtesy of NIC, those who attended visited with one another in the park and watched or participated in games.

Student Luisa Uribe placed second in a tricycle race.

"Wow, I'm tired. That was harder than I thought it would be," she laughed. "This is really nice."

Derinda Moerer, a staff member in the college's communication and fine arts department, wearing a below-the-knee 1930s-style day dress, was one of the people who came dressed for the costume contest.

"I'm one of the first faculty members to come on campus," Moerer said. "I wouldn't think of going out without my hat and gloves."

Dressed as Rosie the Riveter, Chantel Black, a graduation specialist at the college, won the contest and went home with the prize -- a room at The Coeur d'Alene Resort.

The picnic coincided with the release of the book, "The Gathering Place: A History of North Idaho College" by author Fran Bahr. Bahr and former NIC presidents Bob Bennett and Barry Schuler were on hand to sign copies for those who purchased them.

President Priscilla Bell, who helped serve the food, spoke to the group dressed like a short-order cook from another era, with a paper hat and black bow-tie.

Bell reminisced about what it was like when what was then called Coeur d'Alene Junior College first opened its doors on the third floor of city hall with 74 students.

Then, she read a letter from Sen. John Goedde, who had been invited to speak but could not attend.

Goedde sent his birthday wishes and congratulated the college for the impact it has had and will continue to have on the region.

"Now more than any other time, North Idaho College is a shining light in the future of North Idaho," Goedde wrote.

Rep. Frank Henderson, who spoke at the college's 50th anniversary in 1983, was the guest speaker. He recalled attending the 1933 World's Fair as a boy and being astounded and excited by the promise of advances in science and technology.

"That was just a start to our technological age and NIC's impressive history," Henderson said.

He said many of those visions have come to pass.

There is one "common element" Henderson said should be recognized.

"We should remember the role education has played," he said.

He spoke of the rapid growth of North Idaho, placing new demands on the college to meet the community's needs as the area continues to change from a timber and mining economy to manufacturing, tourism, offices and now health services.

"Achievement will only be realized through the offerings of our educational institutions," Henderson said.

It's his hope, he said, that when the college celebrates its centennial and someone is invited to speak about NIC's future and celebrate its past, those achievements will be recorded in history.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

CONSTITUTION DAY: Starting from scratch

Moscow second-graders try to get a handle on nation's most important document
Debbie Bell says the trick to teaching 7-year-olds about the U.S. Constitution is putting it in terms they can understand.

"They haven't really heard this much at their age. You have to tie it into their mentality at 7 years old," said Bell, a second-grade teacher at McDonald Elementary School in Moscow.

Rather than bombarding them with facts, Bell lets her students talk about the ideas of the Constitution as they apply to second-grade life.

In 2005, a law was enacted that states, "Each educational institution that receives Federal funds for a fiscal year shall hold an educational program on the United States Constitution on September 17 of each year for the students served by the educational institution."

Bell said teaching the Constitution to elementary schoolchildren is much different than teaching it to junior high school or high school students.

Her students started by assembling a U.S. flag with construction paper. The names of the 13 original colonies were written on stripes, and blue stars listed facts about the Constitution such as, "The Constitution was created so that all people would be treated fairly."

"Then we go into what is being fair, how would you want to treat other people fairly or be treated fairly," Bell said.

Bell said the tricky part is figuring out how to make the information "stick."

"Can you think of something we do at our school where we elect people to represent us?" Bell asked the class.

The answer was "student council." Bell told the class McDonald Principal Laurie Austin is like the president of the school. Sometimes she also acts like a court and interprets the law, in the case of student bullying or when other school rules are broken.

Bell's students learn about the United States and sing songs like "America the Beautiful" throughout the year, but she said teaching gets harder when she has to explain the founding of the country.

Understanding the writing of the Constitution can be mind-boggling at a young age.

"So George Washington and his friends, I think, did it," Jackson Alexander, 7, said before the lesson.

Rachel Freeman, also 7, said Thomas Jefferson signed the Constitution "in big letters" because of King George's poor eyesight. Actually, that was John Hancock's signature on the Declaration of Independence.

Facts aside, Alexander and Freeman seemed to have the right idea.

"Without the Constitution, there probably wouldn't be America, or what we are now," Freeman said.

"So there wouldn't be presidents and lawyers and people," Alexander added.

Both said they agree with the requirement that all students learn about the Constitution on Sept. 17.

"I can understand the law because the Constitution is very important," Freeman said.

"Yes, it is," Alexander said, nodding solemnly.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Middleton voters OK school bond

EDUCATION: Nearly \$52 million will pay for 250,000-square-foot senior high building

MIDDLETON — Middleton voters gave overwhelming approval Thursday to a \$51.9 million bond that will fund the construction of a new high school.

Officials said the bond measure received 1,163 yes votes and 191 no votes, an approval rate of nearly 86 percent. It needed a two-thirds supermajority.

The new 250,000-square-foot high school is projected to cost about \$180 per square foot and support 1,700 students.

The current building has space for 725 students, and 915 are now enrolled, Superintendent Rich Bauscher said. Many students attend classes in portable units, and the district projects continued growth.

The district plans to convert the current building into a middle school when the new high school is complete. Officials had the existing school reconfigured to serve as a middle school when it was rebuilt after a fire in early 2007.

Bauscher said the district plans to break ground in March 2009 and complete construction in July 2011 in time to open for students that fall.

Officials have said the timing of the bond serves as a benefit to residents because the district will be able to bid the job in the winter when contractors aren't as busy.

The school district's tax rate will remain at \$4.45 per \$1,000 of taxable value even with the bond, officials said. They said the district will be able to generate the \$51.9 million without raising taxes because of several steps, including:

- The retirement of an existing bond
- Refinancing of existing bonds
- Increased market value
- About \$17.4 million in state subsidy payments from the Idaho School Bond Levy Equalization Program

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Middleton School District to get a new high school in fall 2011

Middleton School District will get a new high school.

Voters overwhelmingly approved a \$51.9 bond Thursday for construction of the school as part of a 10-year facilities plan.

The vote was 86 percent in favor and 14 percent opposed. A two-thirds majority is needed for approval. The vote count was 1,163 in favor, 191 opposed.

The school is expected to open in fall 2011.

'Clickers' let teachers see who's really learning a lesson

Use of classroom tool is spreading in the Valley, and kids love it

Six-graders from Amity Elementary School use remote controls to answer math problems during class

Edition Date: 09/19/08

Hand-held electronic devices for children may catch a lot of flak. But the little plastic keypad that Jill Hanford's sixth-graders use is revolutionizing the way she teaches her classes.

Hanford swears by the "clicker," a device that looks like a remote control but functions as a silent link between Hanford and her students. The clicker lets students answer Hanford's questions simultaneously and allows her to see what proportion of the class understood the concept.

The device keeps the whole class engaged. And "it's fun," said sixth-grader Sydney Dominguez, a student in Hanford's math class at Amity Elementary School in West Boise. "Also, it's way easier than having to raise your hand, and you don't have to share your answer with the whole class, so you won't get embarrassed."

HOW CLICKERS WORK

Hanford stands at the front of the room and explains the math lesson. She displays a problem on the projector screen at the front of her class, which is linked to her computer. Then Hanford asks students to answer the problem.

At this point in a traditional classroom, students would raise their hands. A few who knew the answer would keep their hands down out of shyness, and a couple of others might answer aloud.

In Hanford's classroom, silence reigns as everyone works out the problem and enters the answer on the clicker. Boxes at the bottom of the projector screen light up, indicating that there are answers, but not who entered them. That way, nobody knows how long it takes a particular student to do the problem.

Privacy is a huge selling point for the clickers, which are growing in popularity at Treasure Valley schools. Hanford can tell what proportion of the class got the multiple-choice answer right, and even how many chose the other options. She can use the information sent in by the clickers to assess how many people learned the lesson far more quickly than she could if she were grading papers. Only Hanford knows the identity of the students who sent in right answers or wrong ones.

CLICKERS IN THE VALLEY

Clickers are part of a package officially called a Classroom Performance System. Any teacher with a computer and projector can use them. In southwestern Idaho, many elementary school teachers refer to two main suppliers of the devices: an Indiana company called CIM Audio Visual, and the Houston-based Data Projections.

The devices can be found in classrooms from elementary schools to graduate schools around the country. Corporations use them, too, for assessing what workers are gaining from their training, said Heather Halpin, a sales representative for Data Projections.

Schools pay between \$1,700 and \$2,700 for a 32-student system from CIM Audio Visual or Data Projections. Several teachers received grants from the Boise Public Schools Education Foundation for their systems this year.

Amy Jones, a sales rep for CIM Audio Visual, estimates there are 450 of her company's classroom systems in Idaho, about one-third of them in the Treasure Valley and most of those in the Boise School District. Halpin said she has sold about 10 sets of the clickers in the Treasure Valley. Clickers also are used at Boise State University.

Hanford heard about the clickers through a University of Idaho program that showcased education technology.

"The students I had with me were like, 'These are the coolest things,' and they just loved them right away," said Hanford, who was the first to use clickers at Amity Elementary four years ago. "They saw that everybody had a chance to participate, instead of that fast hand."

WHAT TEACHERS, STUDENTS THINK

Clickers save teachers time, said Amy Pinkerman, a fifth-grade teacher at Mountain View Elementary who won a grant from the Boise Schools Foundation this year to purchase a system that uses clickers. She has been using the clickers for four years.

"I can spend an hour with (the students) versus an hour of grading," Pinkerman said. "With all the testing, this is a great tool for us."

It's also a boon for kids who don't have good handwriting.

"There are some kids who are extremely bright and have poor handwriting skills for some reason," Pinkerman said. "It puts everybody on a level playing field."

The clickers take a day or two to get used to, said Peyton Jones, a sixth-grader at Amity. Jones said he's sometimes shy about raising his hand, but the thing he likes best about using the clickers is that they show him how well the rest of the class did. He doesn't like feeling singled out.

Using a clicker instead of raising your hand, "You don't feel like you're the only one who knows it," said Jones.

Idaho Department of Education to help charter school developers

The state Department of Education plans to help people who are trying to develop charter schools as an alternative to the traditional public school system.

The agency will hold a Sept. 24 workshop in Boise to assist charter school developers with information about the initial steps they need to take, such as developing a business plan.

The state law allowing charter schools was passed in 1998 and since then, more than 30 have been established in Idaho by teachers, parents and community members.

Charter schools now hold about 11,000 students statewide.

Idaho is one of five states awarded federal money earlier this year to further develop charter schools.

Federal grants also went to Oregon, New York, Utah, and Florida.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

State to help charter school developers

BOISE, Idaho - The state Department of Education plans to help people who are trying to develop charter schools as an alternative to the traditional public school system.

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Idaho agency targets at-risk Hispanic kids

BOISE, Idaho - School districts are identifying more than 100 at-risk Hispanic students in Idaho to participate in workshops geared at keeping them from dropping out.

The Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs will host the yearly event in Nampa next month.

Commission specialist Juan Saldaña says the Latino Youth Summit will aim to reach kids in Idaho schools who are "falling through the cracks."

A study by the commission earlier this year found that Hispanic students continue to score below their non-Hispanic counterparts on statewide tests.

The study prompted efforts to improve these scores and slow high school dropout rates among Hispanics, which are higher than any other ethnic group in Idaho.

The Oct. 23 event includes workshops that will help prepare students to write resumes and conduct job interviews

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

This man loves ISU

Randy Gaines has called for scholarship donations for three or four years

POCATELLO — Randy Gaines spent most of Monday afternoon near a telephone.

Gaines was at Idaho State University's Pond Student Union building, where he and a small team working for "I Love ISU" campaign were calling up staff and faculty around the university.

The campaign has volunteer callers, such as Gaines, who phone potential benefactors around the community to ask for pledged donations. Eventually, the committed pledges can be used as scholarship money for local ISU students.

"It's a real committing effort," Gaines said. "And of course, I don't think you can find a better source than student scholarships. If it weren't for the students, we wouldn't be here."

Gaines' team did its round of calls Monday. He said the callers mostly received pledges of \$25 to \$100.

In total, Gaines' team received more than \$35,000 in pledges. That figure does not include the pledges that other local campaign groups who made calls around Pocatello were able to garner.

Gaines said the process is simple. Local callers, who all operate out of the SUB for Pocatello's turn in the campaign this week, call up the potential donor, introduce themselves and explain the campaign's cause.

"We call them, even if we don't know them," he said. "But generally, we call people we know. You call them, identify yourself and state the cause. That's really all you have to do."

Gaines said he has taken part in the campaign for about three or four years. He said most of the staff members he has called on campus have been very generous to the campaign's cause.

"They sympathize with the plights students face," Gaines said. "This year, I didn't get a single person that said 'No.'"

State budget shortfall to reduce road funding

The recent completion of the Topaz to Lava Hot Springs road improvement project on Highway 30 may have been timely.

Future highway and bridge reconstruction projects that could be funded with Idaho's Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle bonds may see road blocks as the Idaho Transportation Board seeks to reduce the program's funding in 2009.

Following Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter's recent announcement that the state expects a nearly 6 percent funding shortfall for its fiscal year 2009 budget, the transportation board is worried that federal dollars for Idaho's highway fund will continue to decline and requested cuts to the GARVEE fund.

The Topaz to Lava Hot Springs project, which was highlighted in a ceremony near Lava Hot Springs Thursday, has received nearly \$22 million from the GARVEE fund.

Idaho started the GARVEE fund about two years ago in anticipation of increasing inflation and rising costs for transportation commodities, two factors that affect the amount of funding the federal government pours into the state.

Every year, lawmakers approve bond authorizations through GARVEE, which allows the Idaho Transportation Department to seek dollars from state residents and buyers in the market. The state repays the bonds with federal dollars and caps the annual GARVEE fund at no more than 30 percent of the transportation funding it expects to receive from Congress.

The Idaho Legislature approved a total of \$998 million for the GARVEE fund and has allowed \$584 million in bond authorizations since 2006. The Idaho Transportation Board intended to ask lawmakers to approve nearly \$300 million for the GARVEE fund next year, but recently requested to trim the allocation to \$125 million.

Despite recent fears over the nation's economy and alternative highway funding, some lawmakers said GARVEE funding had been conservative and haven't confirmed whether or not they support the transportation board's request to cut the bond authorizations.

"GARVEE funding was passed last year, but was passed once again with a lot of reservations," said Rep. James Ruchti, D-Pocatello, pointing out that \$134 million was allocated for GARVEE in the 2008 legislative session. "So people were reluctant to (spend more on VEE) already. And if revenues continue to shrink, it's going to make it harder to get legislators to continue voting (for more) funding to GARVEE."

The Legislature approved \$250 million for GARVEE in 2007 and \$200 million during the first year.

While fellow lawmakers have supported the transportation board's recent decision, Ruchti said he is undecided.

"I'm just going to take all of this information into consideration when it's time to vote," he said. "I voted to fund GARVEE last year, but I got to tell you, they're tough decisions."

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Taking steps to safety

Parents start 'walking school bus' program

Elliott Hess / ehess@postregister.com - Ed Dahlquist, front, stops traffic on First Street in Idaho Falls as Jennifer Facer walks children across the crosswalk on their way to Falls Valley Elementary School on Thursday morning. Dahlquist, Facer and other parents wear yellow jackets to signal that they are part of the "walking school bus," a program started by Julee Sidwell in which parents make sure students get to school safely and on time.

Julee Sidwell doesn't worry about her children walking to and from school anymore.

The Idaho Falls mother spearheads a "walking school bus" program for Falls Valley Elementary School.

Adults who live in the walking areas are equipped with yellow jackets and appear on sidewalks before school starts to make sure children are safe.

The idea was sparked last year when another parent decided she wanted to make sure neighborhood children got to school safely.

It took off this school year when Bonneville Joint District 93 announced that some of its students living near Falls Valley, Iona, Tiebreaker and Woodland Hills elementary schools wouldn't be able to ride the bus to school anymore.

Now, roughly 400 students walk to school.

"I just don't worry too much because it's a lot of eyes out there," Sidwell said, adding that in the winter months many parents will get together and carpool.

In the past, the state paid 85 percent of the district's cost of getting students to and from school as long as specific criteria were met.

And the state supported short-distance bus routes in certain instances, when there weren't enough sidewalks in an area, and if students had to cross busy roads.

But several neighborhoods throughout Idaho Falls no longer qualify for reimbursement from the Idaho Department of Education if they live within a mile and a half from the schools (unless there are certain barriers that could make walking unsafe).

"If we had the resources, I would bus every child to school -- it's the safest way," said Guy Bliesner, District 93's health safety and security coordinator. "This way sort of re-creates Mayberry."

The program costs about \$5,000 a year to run, and students and volunteers are given incentives -- such as movie tickets and goodies -- throughout the year to participate.

The district received a grant to implement the program, but volunteers are optimistic that fundraisers will help them become self-sufficient next year.

"This is a new reality," Falls Valley Principal Tom Gauchay said. "Our number one priority is to keep the kids safe."

Kindergartner Joseph Kelley doesn't mind.

The 5-year-old walks to Falls Valley with other children who live around his house.

"The best part will be when I get the training wheels off my bike," Joseph said. "Then I'll get to be a real kid and ride to school."

Volunteers are optimistic their efforts will help children like Joseph stay safe from bullies and other unsafe situations that could arise during their trek to school.

"The whole idea gets the neighborhood involved and really creates a sense of involvement," Sidwell said.

Cops and courts reporter Heather Wells can be reached at 542-6765.

Buses in District 93

Buses: 70

Routes: 256

Students bused (last count made in April 2007): 4,200

Get with the program

Bonneville Joint School District 93 is working on getting grant money to start a "walking school bus" program at Tiebreaker, Iona and Rimrock elementary schools. If you'd like to volunteer, call Guy Bliesner at 525-4400, ext. 1258.